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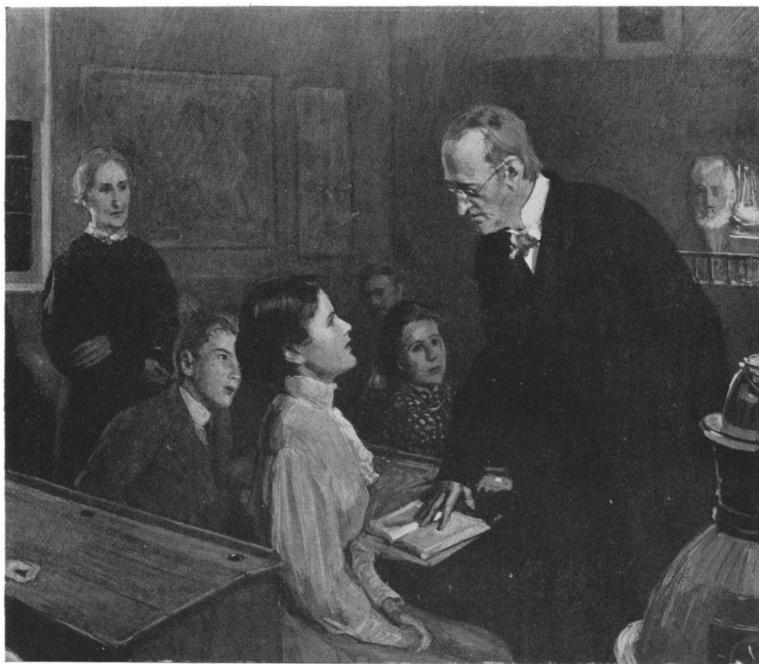
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THE SPELLING BEE

B. J. ROSENMEYER

AMERICAN ILLUSTRATORS

AN EXHIBITION SENT OUT BY THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF ARTS IN CO-OPERATION WITH THE SOCIETY OF ILLUSTRATORS

FOR the fourth year the American Federation of Arts has sent out on a long circuit an exhibition of original works by American illustrators assembled through the co-operation of the Society of Illustrators, of which Mr. Charles Dana Gibson is president. The exhibition this year comprises about one hundred and seventy works and will be shown in Lincoln, Nebraska, at the University of Nebraska, St. Paul, Minneapolis, Pittsburgh, Rochester, Ann Arbor, Kansas City and Dubuque. It was shown first in the National Arts Club, New York, and is entirely composed of the works of members of the Society of Illustrators. Some of the exhibits are in black and white, but quite a number are in color, and all without exception have been found available for reproduction.

Illustration has come to occupy a large place in the field of American art and offers rewards commensurate to achievement. The introduction of photo-mechanical processes has greatly enlarged its scope, while not of necessity reducing its standards. At one time the illustrator was very much restricted by the limitation of reproductive methods, but now he may work in any medium and manner he may choose provided certain broad boundaries are kept in mind. On this account we have great diversity in our illustrations today and sometimes it may be thought insufficient scholarship.

It must be said, however, that in the field of illustration, more truly than in that of painting, has contemporary American life been reflected. Turn the pages of any of our leading magazines



ILLUSTRATION FOR HARPER'S

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JOHN ALONZO WILLIAMS

and one will see familiar tableaux from all stations in life. And what an impression they have made! No easel picture of the past generation has received the popular homage that has been accorded the type of American girl invented, or at least individually interpreted, by Mr. Gibson. Mr. Reginald Birch has set forth for us for all time our ideal of an English nobleman—and a noble little American boy—the Earl of Dorincourt and little Lord Fauntleroy. And what of the simple homely types of the rural districts made familiar and intelligible to all by Mr. A. B. Frost? Are not all these in a measure significant of American ideals? And we have other no less striking types and instances. There was Howard Pyle, who wrote no less well than he illustrated, and whose influence has gone out through both his work and his teaching. The his-

torical theme was his specialty, and he put it on a high plane. There are, on the other hand, such illustrators as Jessie Wilcox Smith and Elizabeth Shippen Green, now Mrs. Elliott, with their keen, sympathetic, insight into childhood which they interpret most charmingly. And Violet Oakley who from being an illustrator has become a distinguished mural painter, the requirements of decorative quality and simplicity in both branches being much the same. Then there are those illustrators of place, Jules Guerin and Maxfield Parrish, each of whom is endowed with a rich imagination and a peculiarly individual viewpoint. This is not all, there are many, many more, but mention of these few gives indication of the fertility of the field and the importance of the subject.

Not all are represented in the Society of Illustrators' current exhibition, but

the object is to refer to the subject as a whole rather than to specific examples.

It is interesting to recall how many of our distinguished American artists have not only begun their careers as illustrators, but continued to work from time to time in this capacity. The early numbers of the *Scribner's* and *Century*

Often, too often, illustration is spoken of and looked upon as a means to an end—as a crutch to help a lame artist over a rough place in his career, as a stepping-stone to something better. This is all wrong. Illustration unrelated is a worthy avocation requiring no small measure of talent and attainment. All



THE BRIGHT SPOT

E. STETSON CRAWFORD

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Magazines contain works by a galaxy of famous painters. Robert Blum and E. A. Abbey did much to elevate the plane of illustration, and to the end it is true that neither excelled in their paintings their work in illustration—recall, for example, Abbey's Shakespearean illustrations. The list is too long to give, but mention should be made of notable portrait drawings by John W. Alexander, done shortly after he returned from Europe, which are infinitely better and truer than any photograph reproduced by the best half-tone process could be.

art is of necessity to a degree commercial. The illustrator sells to the publisher, the painter to the individual. The former, moreover, has a larger audience than the latter—his influence is much more widely felt, his art more democratic. The better, therefore, our so-called commercial art the better will be the taste of the public. Illustration sometimes enters the field. It might legitimately more often do so, giving us better advertising art of all descriptions. But in any event it has a place quite its own, and a place of much importance.